United Nations A/AC.183/SR.344

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 January 2013

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 344th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 13 August 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Tanin ..... (Afghanistan)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

Report on the United Nations Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Geneva on 12 and 13 June 2012

Report on the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Bangkok on 10 and 11 July 2012

Briefing on the humanitarian impact of settlements and forced displacements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

12-46107 (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair**, summarizing some of the activities and developments that had taken place since the Committee's previous meeting, said that violence around Gaza had escalated in June and July 2012. Rockets and mortars had been fired into Israel and the Israeli army had conducted air strikes and made incursions into Gaza, killing 9 Palestinians, including 3 civilians, and injuring 54, of whom 30 were civilians. He reiterated that the Committee condemned both the indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza and the Israeli air strikes and incursions.

3. Tenders had been published for 171 new settlement units in East Jerusalem, while Israel had continued to demolish Palestinian residences and other structures. Israeli settlers had also continued to attack Palestinians. The Committee condemned all settlement activities, which were illegal under international law and should be stopped and reversed immediately. The settlements violated Israel's road map obligations, undermined current efforts to revitalize the peace process and eroded the two-State solution. The situation had been further compounded by the publication of a report authored by a committee led by retired Israeli Supreme Court Justice Edmond Levy and commissioned by the Israeli Government that claimed that the Israeli presence in the West Bank was not a military occupation and recommended the legalization of existing settlement outposts.

4. In July, the Palestinian Authority had faced acute financial challenges and had been able to pay only in part the June and July salaries for 150,000 employees. It expected a $1 billion budget shortfall in 2012.

5. The Follow-up Committee of the League of Arab States on the Arab Peace Initiative had met in Doha on 22 July and had expressed its support for Palestinian plans to seek further recognition at the United Nations.

6. On 25 July, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had briefed the Security Council regarding ongoing attempts to broker an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians on a package of confidence-building measures that would pave the way for the resumption of high-level contacts. He had expressed concern that talks were stalled and that, in the meanwhile, developments on the ground were undermining a negotiated two-State solution. The briefing had been followed by an open debate at which he had spoken.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

7. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that, at a side event of the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace held in Bangkok on 10 and 11 July 2012, Palestine and Thailand had announced that, they would formally establish diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level on 1 August 2012.

8. On 25 July, the Security Council had held a meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The discussions had focused on the illegal Israeli settlements and the recent increase in settlement-building activity in and around East Jerusalem. Council members had called for the immediate cessation of such activity as a precondition for the resumption of negotiations. They had also condemned the other illegal actions of the Israeli occupation authorities, including the demolition of Palestinian homes and businesses, the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and the ongoing illegal and inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip. In the ensuing open debate, the Chair of the Committee had reiterated the Committee's support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

9. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement had been forced to cancel an emergency meeting, which had been scheduled to take place in Ramallah on 5 August 2012, because the Israeli authorities had prohibited the representatives of Algeria, Cuba, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia from entering the West Bank. Other delegates who had been authorized to enter had decided not attend the meeting in solidarity with their colleagues. The Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had met recently in New York and had issued a communiqué condemning Israel's decision. The declaration that the Ministers

were to have adopted at Ramallah would be considered at the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement to be held in Tehran in August 2012. Such action by Israel would not stop those who supported the Palestinian people from working to advance their cause, including by encouraging more States, particularly those within the Non-Aligned Movement, to recognize the State of Palestine.

10. The League of Arab States would hold a meeting at the ministerial level on 5 September 2012 in Cairo to discuss, inter alia, a timetable for enhancing Palestine's status within the United Nations system. In that connection, Palestine had participated as a State at the 10th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. That participation had not only been an important step in achieving recognition for Palestine within the United Nations, but also served to combat Israeli efforts to change the historical names of Palestinian sites.

Report on the United Nations Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Geneva on 12 and 13 June 2012

11. **Ms. Seward** (Department of Public Information), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, had organized the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East in Geneva on 12 and 13 June 2012. The Seminar, which had opened with messages from the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Committee, had brought together journalists, bloggers, activists, film-makers, academics, policymakers and diplomats from Palestine, Israel, the wider Middle East region, Europe and the United States, as well as senior United Nations officials. The event had been promoted extensively across online platforms, including Tumblr and Twitter.

12. Participants had examined the prospects for peace in the light of the forthcoming twentieth anniversary of the Oslo Accords; how the Arab Spring had affected media coverage of the question of Palestine; the role of women's activism and the media in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts and in the wider region; civil society in media and film in the Middle East; and youth activism in the Middle East. One of the main aims of the seminar had been to focus on the core dynamics of the recent Arab uprisings and explore their implications for the question of Palestine. Accordingly, a special effort had been made to increase the participation of women and youth. As a result, the seminar had attracted the largest number of women and the most youthful group of participants in its history. The feedback that had been received from both participants and observers had been extremely positive.

Report on the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Bangkok on 10 and 11 July 2012

13. **Mr. Kommasith** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace had been held at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok on 10 and 11 July 2012. The theme of the meeting had been the role of Asian and Pacific governmental and non-governmental actors in international efforts to address the obstacles to the two-State solution. In his opening message to the Meeting, the Secretary-General had warned that the two-State solution was increasingly at risk. He had also stressed that Israel's continued settlement-building activity was contrary to international law and its road map commitments. That message had been followed by statements from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, the representative of Thailand and the Chair of the Committee.

14. The first plenary session had focused on the illegal construction of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and the reality on the ground. In his opening remarks to that session, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, had emphasized the need for all countries to respect the rule of law. Other speakers had noted that the aim of the Israeli settlement policy was to establish Israeli control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory and ensure that Israel retained possession of vast and strategically important tracts of Palestinian land under any future diplomatic arrangement.

15. Participants in the second plenary session had discussed settlements as the main obstacle to the two-State solution. An Israeli expert had remarked that settlements were not an insuperable obstacle as many of the settlers would be willing to be relocated to Israel in return for generous compensation from the Israeli Government. A small minority of settlers might oppose eviction, perhaps even violently, but Israel would be strong enough to deal with such resistance.

16. The third plenary session had focused on the work of various Asian and Pacific actors in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. In that connection, it had been suggested that Governments which had already recognized the State of Palestine should establish full diplomatic relations with the Palestinian sovereign entity that represented both the West Bank and Gaza. It has been also suggested that, although four of its members had not yet recognized Palestine, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations should adopt a common position in support of the immediate establishment of a Palestinian State. All Meeting documents, including press releases, were available on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

17. On 12 July, a delegation from the Committee had held consultations with Asian and Pacific civil society organizations active in connection with the question of Palestine. The discussions had focused on the role of civil society organizations in promoting the two-State solution and encouraging the Governments of the region to recognize the State of Palestine; current initiatives and projects, including cooperation and coordination among civil society organizations; and relations between civil society organizations and the Committee. The participants had pointed out the need for an international mechanism to coordinate the work of civil society organizations and had urged the Committee to lend its support for the creation of such a mechanism. Although civil society organizations around the world had organized highly effective campaigns against goods produced in Israeli settlements, it was important to continue raising awareness among those who were not familiar with the campaigns and encourage them to participate. The participants had also called on the Committee to re-examine and restructure its programme of work in order to accommodate the needs of civil society organizations.

18. On its way back to New York, the delegation had stopped in Hanoi, where it had held discussions with Vietnamese officials regarding future cooperation between Viet Nam and the Committee. Those discussions had been very encouraging, and it was expected that Viet Nam would play an active role in various intergovernmental and non-governmental forums in support of the Palestinian cause.

19. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report.

20. *It was so decided.*

Briefing on the humanitarian impact of settlements and forced displacements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

21. **Ms. Thoele** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that Israeli settlement-building activity in the West Bank had resulted in demolitions and evictions, forced displacement, restricted movement and access to services or assistance, and settler violence and harassment. Those factors had led to a protection crisis with serious humanitarian consequences. The situation had been brought about by a failure to respect and protect fundamental rights that were enshrined in international humanitarian and human rights laws.

22. Approximately one third of the 2.5 million Palestinians who lived in the West Bank were refugees. The territory was subject to a complex and multilayered system of control that severely restricted the movement of Palestinians and their ability to develop and use land and resources. One aspect of that system was the division of the territory into three areas: A, B and C. Under the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinians exercised full control over Area A, while Area B was controlled by both the Palestinians and the Israelis, with the former responsible for civilian matters and the latter for security matters. Area C, which made up 60 per cent of the West Bank, was under the full control of Israel. It was the only contiguous area of the territory and contained land that was essential for livelihoods and development.

23. The population of Area C, which included West Jerusalem, consisted of some 150,000 Palestinians and approximately 500,000 Israeli settlers, who resided in nearly 150 settlements and 100 settlement outposts. Although they were illegal under international law, the settlements had continued to expand, and the settler population had doubled over the past 20 years. The zoning and planning regulations in effect in Area C were a further constraint on Palestinians' livelihoods. For example, some 10 per cent of Area C had been designated as nature reserves, and Palestinians were not allowed to develop or use such lands. Another 18 per cent of West Bank land was being used by the Israelis as military firing ranges.

24. In the West Bank, the Palestinians also had to deal with many physical and administrative obstacles, including the separation wall, which divided and isolated Palestinian communities. Although it was already over 700 km long, only 60 per cent of the structure had been completed. The wall's route included territory that made up nearly 10 per cent of West Bank and in which some 85,000 settlers resided. However, the International Court of Justice had ruled that the route was illegal and had ordered Israel to dismantle or reroute those parts of the structure situated within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and compensate those affected. Israel had also established some 500 checkpoints inside the West Bank, in order to protect settlers and control the movement of Palestinians. Although the number of checkpoints had decreased since 2009, thereby easing movement between population centres, access to land and resources remained limited.

25. After its annexation of Jerusalem in 1967, Israel had expanded the municipal boundaries to include 28 Palestinian villages, as well as parts of Ramallah and Bethlehem. That annexation was contrary to international law and not recognized by the international community. Furthermore, by virtue of that annexation, the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem were now considered foreigners. The Israeli Government and private settler groups had built several illegal settlements in East Jerusalem that housed some 200,000 settlers, who now constituted some 40 per cent of East Jerusalem's population. The construction of those settlements had resulted in the eviction and displacement of Palestinians, as well greater fragmentation and tension in Palestinian areas.

26. The separation wall had cut off Jerusalem from the West Bank, and the territory's Palestinian residents required special permits to access the city. Another consequence of the construction of the wall was that there were now East Jerusalem identity cards holders who were isolated in the West Bank and holders of West Bank identity cards who were isolated in Jerusalem. The former were known as "isolated communities" and the latter as "dislocated communities".

27. There was a severe housing shortage in East Jerusalem because a very small proportion of the land was zoned for Palestinian construction, and it was very difficult for Palestinians to obtain the required building permits. It was estimated that slightly more than one third of all structures in East Jerusalem had been built without permits. In response, the Israeli authorities regularly demolished such structures or evicted their residents.

28. **Ms. Mulvey** (Norwegian Refugee Council), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the international community had emphatically stated that Israeli settlements were illegal under international law. That position was set out most clearly in Security Council resolution 446 (1979), in which Israel is called on not to transfer its population into the occupied Arab territories; resolution 452 (1979), in which the Council stated that the annexation of East Jerusalem to Israel was unlawful; and 465 (1980), in which the Council stated that settlements should be dismantled. Those three resolution formed the basis of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of 2004 on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In that opinion, the Court had stated that Israeli settlements were a flagrant violation of international law. It went on to add that all States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 were under an obligation to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law. Although the Court's advisory opinions were not binding, they were declarations of international law that States should take into account when conducting their affairs. Given that the Court had stated that its opinions were authoritative, it followed that its opinions could not be ignored by Member States. In addition, the General Assembly had adopted seven resolutions that referred to the illegality of Israeli settlements.

29. International law, in particular The Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention, regulated the relationship between the population of an occupied territory and the occupying Power. Although it was universally agreed that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory fell under the legal regime governing occupation, there was significant disagreement as to which instruments were applicable. That notwithstanding, some of the key relevant provisions of international law were set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention, which provided, inter alia, that the occupying Power shall not transfer its own civilian population into the territory it occupied, confiscate land in order to establish settlements, alter the demographic balance of the occupied territory or destroy property, except in cases of military necessity.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was another instrument that was particularly relevant to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

30. Israel, on the other hand, did not recognize the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, in particular the sixth paragraph of article 49, to all parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It asserted that settlers were not being forcibly transferred into occupied territory but, rather, voluntarily returning to their ancestral land. Although the Geneva Conventions did not prohibit the voluntary return of individuals, the international community, however, had not been persuaded by Israel's argument, particularly given that many settlements were defined as national priorities and received subsidies. Nearly 20 per cent of the budget of the Ministry of Construction and Housing was set aside for settlement housing, and settlers were given tax incentives and discounts. In addition, the Government had built infrastructure solely for settlers' use.

31. Although it recognized that certain settlements were unlawful, Israel insisted that, under its laws, most settlements were legal. According to the 2005 Sasson Report, which had been prepared at the request of former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a settlement was considered lawful if it had been built by order of the relevant political authorities, on State land and in accordance with a lawful design scheme, and if its boundaries had been defined by a military order. Nonetheless, the Israeli Government had actively sought to legalize the status of several of the illegal settlement outposts.

32. A dual legal system was in place in the West Bank, one for Israeli settlers and one for Palestinians. That meant there could be a vast difference in due process of law for two persons who lived side by side. For example, in Area C, a Palestinian who had been accused of manslaughter would be tried in a military court, while a settler would be tried in an Israeli civilian court. The former could be detained for eight days before facing a judge and for a further 90 days before an indictment had been issued. On the other hand, Israeli citizens had to be brought before a judge within 24 hours of arrest and could be detained for a maximum of 30 days. Trials of Israelis had to be concluded within nine months of their indictment, while the period for Palestinians was two years.

33. Prior to 1979, most settlements had been built on the pretext that their existence was required for security purposes. However, in 1979, the Israeli Supreme Court, sitting as the High Court of Justice, had ruled that the Elon Moreh settlement was unlawful because it had not been established for such purposes. After that ruling, the Israeli Government had changed tactics and had begun to seize territory in the West Bank by declaring it State land. According to a former Israeli Government official, nearly 90 per cent of settlements were established on such lands. Currently, some 40 per cent of the West Bank had been declared State land, and that proportion was increasing. Another method of acquiring land for settlement-building was the issuance of expropriation orders, whereby registered owners were forced to sell their lands. Under the absentee property policy, thousands of hectares of land belonging to Palestinians who had fled their homes in 1967 and were being held in trust by the Israeli State had been allocated for the construction of settlements. Further methods included the creation of closed military zones and the issuance of permits, including retroactively by the Supreme Court, for the establishment of settlements.

34. **Ms. Thoele** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that, according to the Israeli authorities, only structures that had been built without official permission were demolished. However, it was almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain a building permit, and only 1 per cent of the land in Area C was available for construction. There were currently 3,300 outstanding demolition orders. The situation in East Jerusalem was similar, with only 13 per cent of the land zoned for Palestinian construction. Various other restrictions, including, inter alia, infrastructure requirements and limited plot ratios, also hindered construction. Almost a third of all Palestinian dwellings had been built without a permit, leaving some 85,000 persons at risk of losing their homes. In East Jerusalem, there were currently at least 1,500 outstanding demolition orders.

35. Since 2002, more than 4,000 persons, half of whom were children, had been displaced from their homes. As a result, those persons had been left without shelter, their access to water, sanitation and education had been reduced, their level of poverty had risen and they had become more dependent on aid. Beginning in 2010, the rate at which the Israeli authorities

demolished homes had risen dramatically. In 2012, some 400 demolitions had occurred to date, displacing 615 persons.

36. The presence of the settlements also affected Palestinians' ability to access services and assistance. In Area C and East Jerusalem, Palestinian students were unable to access education owing to, inter alia, a chronic lack of classrooms, substandard school facilities and inadequate water supply and sanitation facilities. Orders had been issued to demolish 18 schools in Area C and 6 in East Jerusalem. Restrictions on residency and movement forced children to walk long distances and endure lengthy delays at checkpoints in order to reach their schools. Palestinian schoolchildren had also been attacked by settlers.

37. It was difficult for West Bank Palestinians to access specialized health care available only in East Jerusalem. They required special permits, which were difficult to obtain, to enter East Jerusalem and, because ambulances were not allowed to pass through, the sick were forced to cross checkpoints on foot. Approximately 200,000 Palestinians were not connected to the water network, relying instead on tankered water, which was expensive and of low quality. It was difficult to store water because cisterns were also frequently demolished. In Area C, daily water consumption was approximately 50 litres per capita, with some persons using as little as 30 litres. Those levels were far below the recommended minimum of 100 litres. On the other hand, Israeli settlers consumed 300 litres per day on average.

38. Although the West Bank had experienced continued growth in gross domestic product since 2000, that growth could not be sustained because it had been attributable largely to donor funding. Moreover, the most vulnerable Palestinians in Area C had not benefited from that growth. Some 20 per cent of West Bank Palestinians lived in poverty and another 11 per cent lived in extreme poverty, while unemployment stood at 17 per cent. More than half of the herder population was food insecure and one third of all children were malnourished.

39. Physical security was another concern. As an occupied territory, the West Bank witnessed military operations on a daily basis. In 2012, some 2,000 Palestinians, mostly demonstrators, had been injured by Israeli forces. Palestinians were arbitrarily detained for prolonged periods and were subjected to ill treatment in detention. Israeli forces were able to treat Palestinians violently with impunity, and there were also concerns regarding fair trial guarantees. Although the Israel Defense Forces recently announced that they would conduct criminal investigations into killings of Palestinians, it remained to be seen whether that decision would curb soldier violence. Settlers were also harassing and killing Palestinians with increasing frequency. Since 2009, incidents of settler violence had more than doubled. Settler violence included attacks not only against persons, but also property. In 2011, some 400 incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties or property damage had been recorded, including the killing of six persons, three of whom had been children. It should be noted that such violence took place with impunity and that few complaints had been filed. When they had been, the Israeli authorities had refused to issue an indictment in over 90 per cent of the cases.

40. **Ms. Hassan** (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) carried out its protection work in cooperation with national authorities, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Its protection programme sought to protect the Palestine refugees from the effects of armed conflict and forced displacement by monitoring and reporting violations, mitigating the consequences of abuse and raising awareness.

41. Although the West Bank was home to more than 700,000 refugees who were registered with the Agency, only a quarter of them lived in camps; the majority of the Palestine refugees lived in towns or villages. Settlement expansion and settler violence was having an impact on the livelihood of Palestine refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and leading to forced displacement. The Palestine Bedouin communities that lived in the so-called E1-Ma'ale Adumim bubble in Area C were an example of the refugee communities that were at imminent risk of forced displacement.

42. *A documentary film on the plight of the Khan al-Ahmar Bedouins, a Palestine refugee community the livelihood of which was being threatened by expansion of the Ma'ale Adumim settlements, was shown.*

43. Although the intervention of refugee advocates and international attention had staved off the demolition of the community's school, the community nonetheless remained in danger of being forcibly relocated. The inability to move freely, find grazing land or access markets to sell their animal products had greatly increased Bedouins' vulnerability. The natural growth of their communities was being hindered because their traditional herding livelihood was on the verge of collapse.

44. There was a possibility that over 27,000 Palestinian residents of Area C, more than half of whom were registered refugees, who currently lived in structures that had been built without permission would be forcibly transferred. In July 2011, the Israeli authorities had confirmed to United Nations officials that they intended to transfer the 20 Bedouin communities living in the eastern Jerusalem periphery out of their homes. Some 2,300 persons, of whom 80 per cent were Palestine refugees, were affected by that decision, which would result in transfers and evictions that were contrary to international humanitarian and international human rights law.

45. Another area of concern for UNRWA was the village of Walaja, a part of which was located in Area C. The inhabitants of the village were the descendants of a village of the same name in Palestine who had been displaced in 1948. Although the majority of the villagers had ended up in refugee camps or had moved to Jordan and Lebanon, some 100 of them had established the new village of Walaja on agricultural land they had owned on the Jordanian side of the Green Line that was located some two kilometres from the site of the old village. The greatest threat facing Walaja's 2,000 residents, nearly all of whom were registered refugees, was the possibility that they might be displaced because of house demolitions, the construction of the separation wall, settlement expansion and the creation of a national park.

46. Although village land had been identified previously for the expansion of the nearby Givat Yael settlement, in August 2012, Israeli authorities had begun to move forward rapidly with a plan to create a national park on that land. The villagers had filed objections to the plan, but those objections had been rejected in May 2012. It should be noted that the owners of land on which a national park was created were not entitled to compensation. Once the Israeli Minister of the Interior had created such a park, jurisdiction over the land passed to the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, which became the sole entity responsible for the area and had the power to authorize, through the granting of permits, the use of the land.

47. While settler violence was not a direct cause of forced displacement, it placed additional constraints on movement for Palestine refugees and threatened both their personal safety and livelihoods. For example, the Burin cluster, which comprises the villages of Burin, Iraq Burin and Asira al-Qibliya, and was home to some 6,000 registered refugees, was frequently attacked by settlers from Yitzhar, a settlement located less than half a kilometre from the villages. In 2011, the Yitzhar settlers had been involved in more than 70 incidents that had resulted in casualties or property damage. That figure had been the highest reported for any settlement in 2011. The villagers were aggrieved because their complaints had rarely led to indictments.

48. The most recent attack, which had occurred on 19 May 2012, had received worldwide coverage because a video of the incident had been posted on YouTube. A group of settlers had approached Asira al-Qibliya and set fire to land in four or five different locations, some as close as fifty metres to the village, and threw stones at houses. The villagers had retaliated and stone-throwing on both sides had ensued. The video also showed a settler shooting and wounding a registered refugee. The Agency had investigated both incidents and had brought them to the attention of the Israeli authorities. It had also assisted affected community members by providing cash assistance and referrals for psychosocial counseling. A military investigation was ongoing.

49. **Ms. Mulvey** (Norwegian Refugee Council), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that, in recent weeks, the Israeli Civil Administration and military had intensified their efforts to consolidate their control of Area C, in particular the area of the Hebron hills. One of the means being used to achieve that aim was the aggressive enforcement of planning and building laws. Israel had allocated some $3.1 million in order to enable its building inspectors to investigate more actively illegal construction in Area C, including the Hebron hills. There had also been increased efforts to curtail the work of humanitarian organizations, including international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations, and structures funded by foreign humanitarian aid had been targeted. In

addition, laws were not being enforced and settlers were not being brought to justice.

50. The original route of the separation wall would have included the South Hebron hills. When that route had been declared illegal by the High Court of Justice, the Israeli authorities had responded by declaring that area a firing zone. The small village of Zanuta was one of the Palestinian communities that was caught up in the struggle for control of that area. In 2007, the Civil Administration had ordered the demolition of nearly all the buildings in the village and, in 2011, it had issued further demolition orders in response to a request from Regavim, a settler organization. The Civil Administration was currently considering a request to issue an order for the demolition of all houses in Zanuta.

51. The Israeli authorities had also recently stepped up their efforts to enforce 1999 orders for the evacuation of the residents of a dozen Palestinian villages located in an area that had been designated as Firing Zone 918. The villagers, who maintained that they were permanent residents because they had been present in that area prior to 1967, had succeeded in obtaining injunctions against the enforcement of those orders. The Israeli military, however, argued that it needed the land for training purposes. Although it was illegal under international law to remove the permanent residents of an area, even for military purposes, on 9 August 2012, an Israeli court had dismissed the villagers' petitions on the grounds that the Israeli State had decided to spare four of the villages from demolition. Senior European Union diplomats who had recently toured the area had stated that they expected Israel not to enforce the order, the execution of which had been stayed until 1 November 2012.

52. *A documentary film on the plight of the residents of Susiya, a Palestinian village in the South Hebron hills that had been scheduled for demolition, was shown.*

53. Susiya, which had been established in 1917, had originally been home to 350 Palestinians. In 1986, the main part of the village had been declared an archaeological site and, as a result, more than 60 families had been forcibly displaced. Further demolition orders had been executed in 2001, while another four rounds of demolition had occurred in 2011. An additional 50 demolition orders had been issued in June 2012. The High Court of Justice was currently considering a petition that had been submitted by the Regavim settler organization requesting the demolition of the entire village.

54. **Ms. Thoele** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said it was imperative for the international community to halt the expansion of Israeli settlements, which were illegal under international law, on Palestinian land. It must also ensure that the demolition of Palestinian structures and communities and the displacement of civilians was halted, that settlers who committed violence were brought to justice, and that Israel's unjust zoning and planning regime was amended. It was also vital that humanitarian organizations should be allowed to meet basic needs. In that connection, she noted that humanitarian assistance was increasingly being demolished or confiscated. Since 2011, more than 150 donor-funded structures had been destroyed by the Israeli authorities, and, since March 2012, the Israeli Civil Administration had begun confiscating humanitarian assistance even before it had been delivered.

55. **Ms. Mulvey** (Norwegian Refugee Council), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that advocacy and awareness-raising often produced the desired outcome, particularly when legal options had been almost exhausted, as in the cases of Susiya, Zanuta and the villages located in Firing Zone 918. Members of the international community were encouraged to attend court hearings and discuss specific cases with Israeli diplomats. In many instances, pressure from the international community had prevented public structures from being demolished and Palestinians from being displaced.

56. **Ms. Thoele** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the Israeli blockade of Gaza had entered its sixth year. The blockade violated international law and constituted collective punishment against the territory's 1.6 million residents, more than half of whom were children. The movement of persons and goods remained highly restricted, and recent fuel shortages had resulted in daily power cuts lasting as long as 12 hours. In June 2012, some 50 agencies, including those of the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations had called on Israel to end immediately its blockade.

57. **Mr. Yuda** (Indonesia) said that his delegation would welcome further information on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

58. **Mr. Al-Yefei** (Observer for the United Arab Emirates) said that the briefings had painted a disturbing, ugly picture of Israel's occupation and its settlement activities, both of which were flagrant violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. As long as the Security Council remained impotent in the face of Israel's blatant violations of international law, the two-State solution would be further eroded and the region would eventually explode. Although the situation appeared relatively calm at the moment, that appearance did not reflect the realities of the region. Other events in the Middle East were diverting attention from the question of Palestine and the plight of the Palestinian people. Lastly, he said that his delegation would be grateful if the presentations that the Committee had just heard could be posted on the website of the Department of Public Information.

59. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished to request the Department of Public Information to post on the Department's website the presentations on the humanitarian impact of settlements and forced displacements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

60. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.